JAMES W. DEAN'S FILM REVIEWS

Frank and Fair Comments on Latest Productions From Moving Picture Studios

BY JAMES W. DEAN.

NEW YORK, Dec. 16.—Henceforth only good movies will be made.

That, because the tawdry, the hokum-filled film will no longer prove profitable to the producer. This is the belief of Frank Lloyd, one of the screen's most successful directors.

We were chatting about the future development of the photoplay.

"The producer now holds a higher regard for his public," Lloyd said. "The success of films that have been sincerely done has brought him to the conclusion that sincerity is a profitable pursuit."

There is much logic in Lloyd's reasoning. The promise of better pictures is more firmly predicated on the idea that producers want to make money than on the desire, often attributed to them, that they want to do finer things for the sake of art.

The men who really strive to do finer things for the sake of art are the directors and players—and by no means all of them.

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Lloyd took issue with my published statement that pictures in natural colors would never be achieved and that they would not improve the photoplay.

"Many years of time and many fortunes have been spent in the attempt to perfect the colored photoplay," Lloyd said. "I don't think we ought to say that these people will never accomplish what they are striving for. That is hardly fair. The photoplay itself would not have been invented if nobody thought it could be invented.

"However, I think there's little room left for improvement on the technical side of picture-making. Lighting and photography have been developed to a point where pictures are no longer flat objects upon the screen."

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I have called Lloyd one of the most successful directors. His record substantiates the claim. Among the pictures he has directed are "The Tale of Two Cities," "Les Miserables," "Madame X," "The Woman in Room 13," "The Grim Comedian," "The Invisible Power," "The Sin Flood," "The Man From Lost River," "When a Man Sees Red," "The Eternal Flame," "The Voice From the Minaret" and "Oliver Twist." I consider "Madame X." starring Pauline Frederick, the best melodrama ever projected on the screen.

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The big moment of "Oliver Twist" comes when Noah Clapole speaks disparagingly of Oliver's mother. Jackie Coogan, as Oliver, is scrubbing the floor and when he looks up at Noah Claypole the tears stream from his eyes.

In reviewing the picture I said Jackie's grief was so real that he must have imagined the taunt directed at his own dear mother.

Lloyd told me how that scene was shot.

"I explained the story to Jackie and told him that he must feel very sad, that what Noah Claypole was saying to him was very nasty. Jackie said to me, 'Mr. Lloyd, does it make any difference if I think of my dog instead of my make-believe mother?' I told him that it wouldn't, if that would make him feel sad. His dog had been crippled a week before. And that's the way Jackie put the pathos into that scene."

Perhaps to a little boy a dog is dearer than any human, after all.

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Saw "Minnie," Marshall Neilan's very human film about an ugly girl's search for romance . . . Saw "The Bootleggers" which drama purports to be a true picture of the grafting possibilities and realities of prohibition enforcement . . . Saw Margaret ("Bubbles") Leahy, who won Norma Talmadge's British movie contest. She's Irish, but looks English . . . Saw "The Toll of the Sea," the best film yet done in colors . . . Saw "It Is the Law," just another stage mystery thriller . . . Saw the best dancing in town done by the colored performers in "Liza" . . . Saw "Singed Wings," a photoplay that adds nothing to the reputation of Penrhyn Stanlaws, the director . . . Saw Constance Talmadge give an inept celluloid imitation of a Chinese girl in "East Is West" . . . Saw Norma and Constance Talmadge, just back from Europe . . . Saw two combinations of brother and sister, Fred and Adele Astaire and Johnny and Ray Dooley, in "Bunch and Judy," an unusual musical comedy in that its first scene is its fastest and best . . . Saw Frederick Hudd, Canadian government trade commissioner to the United States. He told me that pictures now made by the Canadian government are being exhibited in every country in the world except Soviet Russia. The Canadian government maintains a movie publicity bureau . . . Saw Frank Lloyd, the director, who may some day be Jackie Coogan's father-in-law, that young gallant having fallen violently in love with Miss Alma Lloyd.

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Marshall Neilan was in a blithesome mood when he filmed "Minnie" and the picture reflects the wit that is native in him. A smile is tangent on every twist and turn of the story.

In his most recent films Neilan has shown that he is probably a closer observer of human nature than any other director. Or rather, he is a closer observer of the little gestures by which human nature reveals itself.

Neilan would have made an excellent newspaper reporter, one of those stars like Alfred Segal of the Cincinnati Post. Segal is the best known reporter in the central west because he makes you feel that he knows the life story of the people he writes about. Neilan puts that quality into his films.

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Minnie was a wallflower, an ugly duckling left out of the social swim of a Main Street town. She had no mother. Her father lost seven wives and all his money by trying to invent a machine to broadcast electric power after the manner of the radio.

A local Romeo took Minnie for an auto ride. She was quite flattered until his machine stalled. He pointed out a beautiful view to her and put his arm around her. Then he whispered something in her ear and Minnie got out and walked home.

A chewing gum salesman came to town. As a substitute puts it, he knew the homely girls are the most grateful and so he asked Minnie to dance. Later he took her for a ride and his machine stalled in sight of the same beautiful view. He also whispered something to Minnie and she walked home.

Then as countless hundreds of adolescent girls do, Minnie found her romance in fiction, herself becoming the heroine of the various novels. Through this she hit upon the scheme of sending letters to herself and having an aunt in a neighboring town mail her flowers and candy. A stepsister discovers the ruse and gives Minnie until Saturday night to produce her man or face the ignominy of having the ruse disclosed.

Minnie reads of a murdered man whose body is unclaimed. She claims the body and revels in the sorrow of the funeral until a reporter of the neighboring town tells her he knows the man she buried was a Chinaman and a murderer.

To prevent her story being published she tells all. Being himself one of life's misfits the reporter falls in love with Minnie. He calls for her in his flivver. She is wearing new slippers. His machine stalls in view of the beautiful spot that had by this time become very familiar to Minnie. When he remarks on the view, Minnie gets out of the flivver, sits on the running board, takes her old shoes out of a bag she carried and prepares to walk home. When he tells her to stay there while he goes after the gasoline Minnie knows love has come to her at last.

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The blue-nosed censors of some states will probably cut out the auto ride episodes. In the same states negligee and disrobing bedroom farces on the stage are permitted. The auto rides may be a bit suggestive, but they approximate incidents that will be readily recognized by at least nine of every ten young men and girls who read these lines.

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Neilan should have ended his story at the climax of Minnie's romance, but he goes on to show that her father becomes rich through his invention and that a plastic surgeon gives Minnie beauty. Why can't some of the movie heroines find happiness despite homeliness and poverty? Real life heroines very often do.

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Leatrice Joy plays Minnie. It is her best role. She is a better actress in this film than she was in "Manslaughter." Likewise Matt Moore as the reporter does his best work for the screen.

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One of the biggest worries this writer has is the throwing away of cigars that have not been completely consumed. When Minnie's sixth stepmother objects to her father's cigar he clips off the burning end with wire snippers. We cigar smokers ought to carry pocket-size snippers. Or small scissors.

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Another Hergesheimer story is to be filmed. It's "Wild Oranges."

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Anna May Wong is to support Dorothy Devore in a Christie comedy.

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Speaking of capable casts—Frank Mayo, Miriam Cooper, Mitchell Lewis, Josef Swickard, Harold Mills, James Truax and Stuart Holmes are to appear in "The Man From Outside."

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Joseph Henabery has started filming "The Tiger's Claw," featuring Eva Novak.

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"Hungry Hearts," as cinema plays go, is rather drab except for the dramatic characterization of Rosa Rosanova in the mother role. However, it lends itself to synchronization with stirring music and the ear can thus bring stimulation not sensed by the eye.

I watched S. L. Rothafel, director of the Capitol, the world's largest theatre, score "Hungry Hearts," Erno Rapee, musical director, and a piano player were with him in the small projection room.

Several bars of the "Volga Boat Song" were played as introduction, the tempo of the music being varied with the tempo of the film's action. The opening scenes are in Russia. A letter arrives from America. "Now 'Hail Columbia,'" Rothafel shouted. "Play it slowly." That incident over a Russian folk dance was ordered by Rothafel, projection of the film being stopped until a suitable air was hit upon.

Then the boat bringing the immigrants was shown passing the Statue of Liberty. Rothafel was on his feet, shouting out the notes of "Hail Columbia," the pianist playing fortissimo.

Rothafel seemed in a mad frenzy of patriotism. He could easily have imagined himself chorus leader in the steerage of the boat, swinging his arms in rhythm with the music. However, he was in no frenzy. He was simply letting his imagination have full sway, magnifying the reaction of the song on himself in proportion to the 5400 people who would be sitting in the theatre when the orchestra would play it as accompaniment to the picture.

Sitting in the theatre later the changes from one theme to the other were hardly perceptible. Unless one is given to analysis, to minute examination of his entertainment; one is not aware whether it is the picture or the musical accompaniment which plays upon its emotions.

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My enthusiasm for "Hungry Hearts" seems somewhat diminished since I previewed the film five months ago. This diminution may be due to the fact that I have seen the picture three times. As in the case of books, plays and pictures, only the great photoplays bear repetition.

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Mrs. E. J. Worth writes from Edson, Alberta, Canada, to ask what opportunity the screen holds for historical plays.

"Robin Hood," "Orphans of the Storm," "When Knighthood Was in Flower," "Passion" and "Deception" have demonstrated the worth of European history as material for screen drama. American history offers even more interesting material. The surface was scratched by "To Have and To Hold' and "In the Days of Buffal Bill." Paramount is now filming a story of the western pioneer days in "The Covered Wagon." Charles Ray is filming "The Courtship of Miles Standish." The romance of the whaling schooners is shown in Elmer Clifton's "Down to the Seas in Ships."

And "The Birth of a Nation" is one of the greatest pictures ever made.

This seems to be sufficient premise to assert that American historical romances offer a wider field than any other source for the immediate future of the photoplay.

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Turning to the London Saturday Review it is pleasant to read a defense of the photoplay so adequately expressed as in the following excerpt, written by James Agate:

"The implication that the film cannot be considered a form of art is, I am sure, utterly wrong. Art is not an immutable thing, rigidly contained within fixed laws. The principle of beauty may be unalterable; its expression must keep pace with mechanical invention. Those who wilfully deny the esthetic possibilities of the film seem to me to belong to the slightly demented order of beings who would go back to printing in black letter, hand loom weaving, the viol da gamba and the toga. Art stopped short neither with the Empress Josephine nor with Mr. Edison. What a mess of it serious composers would have made if they had stopped resolutely at the harpsichord and ignored the piano! The piano was bound to come, and the artist could best defend it from the vulgar by using it himself. So, too, the cinema had to come, and our dramatists can best preserve this new medium of drama from the clowns by utilizing it themselves. Synchronization is in the air, and I am persuaded that the operatic composer will do well to consider the screen scenario as the peg upon which he must, sooner or later, hang his score.'

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Rumor. Straight from my Hollywood Listening Post. Jobyna Ralston, is to succeed Mildred Davis as leading lady in Harold Lloyd's comedies. Mildred, after several years with Lloyd, is to be starred. Bebe Daniels started to stardom that way. Jobyna has been acting in Hal Roach comedies.

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"Down to the Sea in Ships" marks a new epoch in picture making. The picture results from the pride of a city in the glory of its traditions. It is an authentic page of the country's history. It is sincere drama sincerely done.

The story deals with the days when whalers set out from New Bedford, Mass., when the man that slung the hand harpoon was a hero, when life itself was rudimentary, elemental.

Among those cooperating in the filming of the picture were the city of New Bedford, the Apponegansett Meeting Society of Friends, the Port society and the Rev. Charles Thurber, chaplain of the Seamen's Bethel, and the Old Dartmouth Historical society.

Real Quakers in the costumes of their ancestors are extras in this picture. Some of the scenes take place in a house 200 years old. The action at sea takes place on the "Charles W. Morgan," the oldest whaling vessel afloat, having been built 80 years ago.

In short, "Down to the Sea in Ships" is historically "the real thing."

It is the pioneer of pictures that are bound to come, pictures that will present the drama and the romance in the pages of history.

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Elmer Clifton directed "Down to the Sea in Ships." He made it something more than a picture story of dry relics of history. The scenes in which a great school of whales is sighted and a harpooned whale sweeps the crew of a small dory across the water in a "Nantucket sleigh ride" are about as thrilling as any ever caught by the camera.

The real heroes of the story to me are Alex G. Penrod and Paul Allen, who photographed the whaling scenes. They seemed to be atop the great mammals when they were harpooned.

Clifton was once a cameraman for D. W. Griffith. His work indicates that all directors should be apprenticed as camera-crankers before they take up the megaphone. Clifton's experience as cameraman taught him the potential scope of the camera.

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Much of the sincerity of the picture must also be credited to the players. No name of a great star appears in the cast. Raymond McKee and Marguerite Courtot were capable in the leading roles. Those were the only two whose faces were familiar to me, but the others were equally proficient. The actors were so real in the boat scenes that members of the cast cannot be distinguished from members of the crew. As William Cavanaugh, who had an important role, told me, "They were all good troupers."

Those whose personalities lifted them to notice were Clara Bow, Ada Laycock and James Turfler, each of whom were making their first appearance before the camera. Miss Laycock, a resident of New Bedford, is quite as humorous a character actress as was Flora Finch in the old John Bunny comedies. Miss Bow will undoubtedly gain fame as a screen comedienne.

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CINEMAGRAMS.

"The Broad Road" is the first picture filmed at Orlando, Fla. It is the story of a southern lumberjack by Hapsburg Liebe. May Allison stars in it.

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Leatrice Joy and Nita Naldi are to be featured in "You Can't Fool Your Wife," a modern vamp story by Waldemar Young.

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Ivan Linow, the wrestler, plays the role of Bolshevik leader in "Enemies of Women," the Ibanez story being filmed with Lionel Barrymore as star.

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An 1800-seat movie theatre has opened in Honolulu. A company has been formed to open 1800 movie theatres in China. Verily, the movie groweth.

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Maurice Costello, old-time favorite, will be seen in "Glimpses of the Moon."

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Carlyle Blackwell is Lady Diana Manners' leading man in "The Virgin Queen." It is his 370th picture. He made his film debut in 1907 in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

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Perhaps Von Stroheim is to direct "Ben Hur." He has been insured for $1,000,000 by Goldwyn. So has June Mathis who is writing the scenario for "Ben Hur."

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Lewis Dayton, British film veteran, makes his debut in American pictures as Dorothy Phillips' leading man in "The White Frontier."

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John S. Robertson has gone to Cuba to film scenes for "The Bright Shawl" in the very locations described by Joseph Hergesheimer. Richard Barthelmess has grown sideburns just like Valentino's although he is to play the part of Charles Abbott, American. Dorothy Gish will be La Clavel, the Spanish dancer.

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An honest photoplay has been made from "A Bill of Divorcement." Clemence Dane's great stage hit. It is the best thing of its kind that has yet come from the British studios.

The story is simply and sincerely told. Denison Clift the director, withstood any temptation to dress the film in the flimsy trappings that so often lead directors into pitfalls. He realized the power of simplicity.

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A man believes his entire happiness depends on his wife. He realizes that he has an hereditary streak of insanity. Agitation for a bill permitting divorces to the spouses of incurably insane disturbs him. He worries about the matter until he becomes entirely unbalanced and is committed to an asylum.

The divorce bill passes. Years after his commitment and the pronouncement that his case is incurable, his wife divorces him to marry another man. She is urged to this end by her daughter. The daughter is also happy in her betrothal to a young fellow.

The father returns—cured. The daughter urges the mother to go, to gather the happiness that she planned with a normal man. daughter hears the family physi say that the divorce bill is the thing, that the insane should no allowed to pass their affliction o the children.

The daughter breaks her eng ment. The mother leaves husb and daughter to work out their d nies together.

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In the stage play the insanity attributed to shell shock. This fea is omitted from the movie versi Imagine if any American director er than William DeMille had di ed this film he would have in duced several spectacular war epis to show how the fellow lost his m tal balance. It would have made ical movie stuff.

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Constance Binney plays the pa the daughter in "A Bill of Div ment." She reveals acting virtues were never evident under Amer direction. She carries the part high intelligence.

Fay Compton in the role of mother demonstrates that she is best screen actress in England. Diana Manners should take les from her. She falls only a little s

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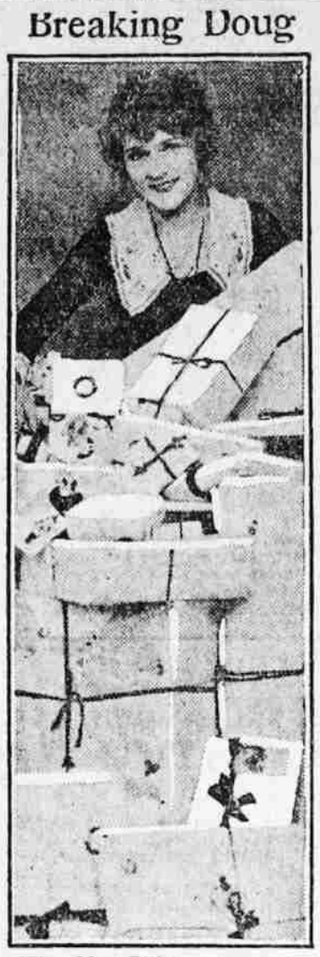
Breaking Doug



When Mary Pickford goes Christmas shopping she certainly puts a dent in the bankroll of her handsome husband. Here she is behind a pile of gifts which she is starting on their way in good season.